1: Ray E-5 (1928-38) 1939 Plateau

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The central groups, notably the Sanpoil and Southern Okanogan, place strong emphasis on the contaminating properties of blood. Most of the tabus are explained, or at least rationalized, in such terms. The existence of a multitude of tabus designed to keep the menstruating women from contaminating other people and things argues against too literal acceptance of the declarations that menstruants are always isolated. There are not only tabus, but remedies in case these are broken. In the central Plateau the menstruant is not permitted to cook food or touch the food of others. She is forbidden to walk around the head of a bed, to take water from certain sources, to touch weapons, and the like. Yet in the menstrual hut there is no opportunity for such actions. But in fact much of the ill that befalls a household is attributed to the harmful influences of menstruating women.[104]

Puberty Isolation and Training

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In the southern Plateau, excepting the Klamath, the puberty ritual is essentially the menstrual ritual somewhat more elaborated. For example, the Southern Okanogan girl

> left the dwelling house and remained in a little tipi built for her some distance from the village. Before she went her mother bound her hair in rolls which hung low on either side, behind her ears, and were decorated with fur and sometimes other ornaments. She was required to keep this coiffure during the period of isolation. She might not touch it, even to scratch it, on pain of future baldness. Instead she used a scratcher in the form of a miniature comb which hung in the tipi for her convenience. Her forehead and cheeks were daubed with red and yellow vegetable paint, applied over a layer of pine pitch. She wore undecorated clothing which she was not allowed to change. Sometimes she used a shell or a drinking tube, lest the contact of her lips dry up the spring she wished to drink from. . . . She remained alone in the hut, eating little or nothing. . . . When the flow ceased, she built a small sweathouse, and entered upon a long period of purification. . . . According to varying report, this period lasted from a month to a year. There was probably a great deal of individual and local variation.[105]

The long duration is reminiscent of northern practice. Among the Sanpoil, isolation lasts but ten days. Other details are closely similar, except that the girl is expected to engage in a certain amount of early morning exercise, especially running about the hills. This, too, is a northern custom, but is not unknown elsewhere.

[104] Ray, *Sanpoil and Nespelem*, pp. 134 f.
[105] Cline, *Southern Okanagon*, pp. 110 f.